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GLORIA MOLINA HONORS OVARIAN CANCER SURVIVOR AND ATTENDING NURSES FROM LAC-USC MEDICAL CENTER

Heartfelt Letter by Cancer Survivor Details High-Quality Care at LAC-USC

LOS ANGELES (September 1, 2009)—Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina kicked off Ovarian Cancer Awareness Month this September with a formal presentation at today's Board of Supervisors meeting which included a commendation for ovarian cancer survivor Elena Gutierrez, who wrote a heartfelt letter to Sup. Molina expressing her thanks for the cancer treatment she received from staff—and especially her attending nurses—at the LAC-USC Medical Center.

"When I received Elena's letter, I was deeply moved," Molina said. "The guidance, selfless dedication, skilled care, and advocacy efforts of the nurses we're honoring today truly epitomize the very best in county service."

At today's meeting, Molina honored nurses Velda Carter, Tomasa Lujan, Patricia Sawaya, and Soo-May Yen from the LAC-USC Medical Center's G.Y.N. Oncology Clinic, all of whom attended to Gutierrez during her cancer treatments at the facility and were present during today's presentation.

In Gutierrez' letter to the supervisor, Gutierrez wrote: "[I]n the past thirteen months, I've been to the hospital at least sixty times. In those visits, I was privileged to get to know the nurses in the Department of Oncology at USC County General Hospital. My respect and admiration for their selfless dedication to their profession cannot really be put into words. I can just tell you that anyone who is stricken with the life threatening, mind numbing illness, known as Cancer, will be provided with the very best care and most humane treatment."

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Gutierrez—who underwent intensive chemotherapy—added: “[I]n order to undergo Chemo, successfully a patient must have faith and trust to an extreme degree. But have faith and trust in what or in whom? Doctors? Medicine? Hospital? God? Well yes, of course they are important. But really the answer is in the Chemo Nurses ... When you are gravely ill you become a complete child. Your only guides through the maze of treatments are your nurses. They and they alone know what you need, how you feel and provide comfort and reassurance while administering this delicate and potentially lethal treatment ... [T]he nurses are right there, in the trenches fighting with you.”

Ovarian cancer affects one in every 55 women annually—and, this year, over 16,000 women afflicted with ovarian cancer in the U.S. are at serious risk of succumbing to it. Ovarian cancer is the ninth most common cancer overall, and it is the fifth most common cause of cancer-related deaths in women.

If detected at its earliest stage, the five-year survival rate for an ovarian cancer patient is over 90 percent. A healthy, active lifestyle are important factors in reducing one’s risk, as is a supportive network of colleagues, friends, family, and health care professionals—like the four nurses honored today.

[Photographs of today’s board presentation are available upon request.]

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